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enquiries upon the field of comparative religion, who will read the book without a shade of discomfort or regret. For no one can read it without being convinced that there are incorporated in the Pentateuchal legislation (mainly in its latest priestly code), a variety of ordinances, which are merely traditional survivals from a past heathenism, put forward, when their origin was wholly forgotten, as the fresh and perfect word of God. (Orthodox Christianity has to encounter similar or still more fundamental difficulties, to which Professor R. Smith appears occasionally to allude.) Is not our author, *e.g.*, in the right when he says, "The irrationality of laws of uncleanness, from the standpoint of spiritual religion, or even of the higher heathenism, is so manifest that they must necessarily be looked on as having survived from an earlier form of faith and society" ? (p. 430). The writer of Psalm l., as Professor R. Smith points out (p. 373), scornfully rebukes a popular theory of sacrifice current in his day, which is still indicated to us by a phrase in Leviticus (iii. 11). Is it "orthodox" or "reformed" Judaism which is working upon the Psalmist's lines ?

C. G. MONTEFIORE.

THE FABLES OF ÆSOP.

The Fables of Æsop, as first printed by Caxton in 1484. By JOSEPH JACOBS. (D. Nutt, 1889.)

A NEW edition or a re-issue of Æsop's fables may truly be said to concern all sorts and conditions of men ; for of all books—the Bible itself not excepted—it is probably that with which the great majority of readers have from childhood been most familiar. And the edition before us will suit many tastes. The curious, who love to track and to explore the by-paths of literary history, will find much that is novel and suggestive—if not altogether convincing—in the elaborate preface of Mr. Jacobs, while its light and fluent style will attract the general reader : and indeed to the select of this class the book as a whole is recommended by the inevitable copy of verses from the industrious pen-of-all-work of Mr. Andrew Lang.

In the first place, then, we have a reprint of the fables of Æsop with those of Avian, Alfonso and Poggio as first printed by Caxton in 1484. Though the original Gothic type, which indeed would have been unreadable, has not been imitated, yet to such an extent have the scruples of amateurs in these matters been respected, that the very misprints of Caxton have been religiously preserved. But it is with the prefatory sketch of the history of the Æsopic fable that scholars, and in particular the readers of this review, will chiefly concern themselves ; and to this we now turn.

"Our Æsop is Phædrus with trimmings." This abrupt announcement, with which the preface opens, leads us at once to an important point from which to survey the wide and complicated question before us. For if our Æsop is really Phædrus, whence came Phædrus ? And moreover whence came Avian, whose fables in the middle ages rivalled in popularity those of Phædrus ? That Latin writers had Greek models of some sort in view it is only natural to assume, though, in passing, and in consideration of the original genius of "the last great writer of heathen Rome," we must protest against Mr. Jacobs' sweeping assertion that

"Latin literature is but one vast plagiarism from the Greek." However at this point in our search for Æsop we enter Greek territory, only to discover that the spuriousness of the various collections of Greek fables published under Æsop's name has been evident since Bentley's day, and to find ourselves compelled to wander further afield in search of one Babrius. This Babrius, however, though he composed in Greek, turns out to have been—in the judgment of the most recent Germans—a Roman, and probably the same as the Babrius whom in the year 235 A.D., we find acting as tutor to the son of Alexander Severus. But leaving Babrius on one side, and turning to Greek literature for such evidence as it may have to offer concerning Æsop himself, we find two references and two only. On one hand there is the story of Herodotus about Æsop the slave at Samos and the compensation claimed for his murder, while, on the other hand, Æsop is shown to us by Aristotle pleading as an advocate before the men of Samos on behalf of a demagogue—rather an unusual thing for a slave to do under the circumstances of ancient society. Assuming Æsop to have been Greek, the asserted fact of his being a slave in a Greek community of itself presents a difficulty, though Mr. Rutherford finds a way out of it. Assuming him to have been a barbarian in the interest of our belief that he was a slave—and the veracity of Herodotus is as we know as unimpeachable as that of the Bible, and can be vindicated in much the same way—we are confronted by the equally obvious difficulty of his appearance as an advocate at Samos. In short the accounts as they stand are inconsistent and incredible; and in answer to the question Who was Æsop? the utmost that can be said is summed up in Mr. Jacobs' words: "to the later Greeks Æsop was a kind of Joe Miller." To the further question—How came Æsop of all men to deserve and to attain this distinction?—Mr. Jacobs' hypothesis, that he was the first to make political use of the fable, is no answer, if it appears, as we think it does, that the only recorded case of such political interference is antecedently incredible. With regard, therefore, to the fabulist himself—*stat nominis umbra*; but before passing from the Greek to the Oriental side of the question we are led to the important conclusion that "the Fables of Æsop as literary products are the fables of Demetrius Phalereus." For it is to *The Assemblies of Æsopian Fables* compiled by the latter about the year 300 B.C. that both Phædrus and Babrius can be traced.

After reviewing the various theories put forward by Max Müller, Tylor and Benfey, to account for the appearance of the same or similar fables among peoples widely separate in space and time, Mr. Jacobs decides for the borrowing theory which Benfey favoured. He then presents and analyses the few Jātaka tales to which parallels are to be found either in our Æsop or in Bidpai—a process which naturally leads up to the question "whether the Greeks derived their fables all or some from India." And at this point we are glad to see Mr. Jacobs vigorously combating the views of those scholars, who, under some sudden æsthetic impulse, desert the methods of science, and confound a question of evidence with a question of "taste." Professor Weber discovers something so clear-cut, something so artistic about the Greek fables, as to exclude the very possibility of their being derived from a people who have presumably produced nothing but what is coarsely cut and inartistic. But this at least may be said for Professor Weber that he does not estimate the difference between two things without knowing both of them. Such an Indianist may be allowed to dogmatise about India. But Mr. Rutherford—as becomes a person who knows only one side of the ques-

tion—is even louder in the same elevated strain. Holding himself severely free from any such prejudices as might flow from acquaintance with India and its literary products, is it possible, he asks, that a nation so original as the Greeks should be indebted for their fables to the childish Orientals. And so a possibility which was seriously entertained by a Benfey is banished from the face of the earth with the magnificent decision of a Podsnap. Mr. Jacobs maintains that where close parallels exist between our Æsopic collections and the Jātakas, the latter are prior and original—a conclusion which in his judgment would probably have been that of Benfey, had the latter been in possession of the fuller evidence which now establishes an earlier date than he suspected for the Jātakas.

But we must now proceed to consider the Talmudic fables, as to which we learn that “the industry of Jewish scholars has only been able to unearth about thirty fables from the vast expanse of Talmudic and Mid-rashic literature. Yet, few in number as they are, they are of crucial importance critically.” Of these thirty “all but six, or perhaps only four, can be traced either to India or Greece, or both. It is the obvious inference that the Beast-fable in Judæa is a borrowed product, and the only question is from which of the two sources it has been derived. All our evidence turns in favour of India. For where the Greek and Indian forms of the fables common to the three differ, the Jewish form agrees with the Indian, not the Grecian.” In the course of his endeavour to ascertain through what channel the beast-fable passed from India to Judæa, Mr. Jacobs has been able for the first time, as it appears, to throw light upon a difficult passage in the Talmud which has long tried the ingenuity of the commentators. We are told of R. Jochanan ben Zaccai that “he did not leave out of the circle of his studies even the *Mishle Shu'alim* (*Fox-fables*) and the *Mishle Kobsim*.” The puzzle lies in the last two words, for which the commentators offer the remarkable rendering “Fables of the Washermen.”

“Now there is an uniform Greek tradition that a special class of fables called the Libyan were collected by a Libyan named Kybisas, Kybisios, or Kibysse. Babrius himself in his second prologue couples him with Æsop:—

πρῶτος δὲ, φασίν, εἶπε παισὶν Ἑλλήνων
Αἰώπος ὁ σοφός, εἶπε καὶ Διβυστίους
λόγους Κιβύσσης.

“Now the slightest rounding of a corner of a letter, transforming *mem* (מ) into *samech* (ס) would change the inexplicable *Mishle Kobsim*, ‘fables of washermen,’ into *Mishle Kubsis*, ‘fables of Kybises,’ and with the Greek tradition before us there can be little doubt that the change is justified.”

Mr. Jacobs further concludes that the word Libyan, which appears to have been indiscriminately applied to all dark-skinned races, implies nothing more than the consciousness that the fables so styled were a foreign importation; and he goes so far as to identify them—if not wholly at least—mainly with the Jātakas (p. 130). Be this as it may, we think that few will be disposed to challenge the restoration of Kybises to the Talmud, and if Mr. Jacobs’ preface contained nought else that was novel, it would on that ground alone be a noteworthy contribution to the history of the fable.

But as to the suggestion that Proverbs xxx. 4 and 15-23 are also derived from India, we can see nothing in the first of the parallels adduced but what might easily have occurred independently to two thinkers

in face of the question which has been stated in a thousand forms, but has never yet been answered. And in the last two cases the identity, being only partial, is in our judgment insufficient to support a definite conclusion. But with regard to the four things never sated the closeness of the agreement is such that there seems to be no escape from the conclusion that there has been borrowing on one side or the other; and we hold that on the strength of his parallel from the Mahābhārata (iv. 2227), Mr. Jacobs is entitled to reverse the judgment of Prof. Graetz, who, with the Hitopadēsa alone in view, had decided for Jewish priority.

We have left no space to deal with Mr. Jacobs' presentation of the mediæval history of the fable, particularly in England; but we would specially refer our readers to what is said about the Jewish fabulist Berachyah Nakdan, who seems now at last to have been rescued from the semi-obscurity which has so long hung over his name and fame.¹

In the course of his extended and minute investigation Mr. Jacobs has been led to traverse fields wider than can fall within the ken of any single scholar; but with the help of a never-failing tact he manages to walk circumspectly even when most remote from the limits of his special studies. The errors we have noticed—sins whether of omission or of commission—are few and unimportant. The strange form *itihāsa*, which confronts us at the top of the genealogical tree, we should have taken for a misprint, had it not been repeated (p. 147), and coupled with an interpretation which will come as a surprise to students of Sanskrit or Pali. On p. 130 one of the claimants for the child in the supposed Buddhist original of "the judgment of Solomon" appears as a *Yakshini* or female demon, and so far so good; but on p. 136 the same personage is alluded to as a *rishi*, whereas *rishis* were ascetics of distinguished piety and, so far as our information goes, of the male sex exclusively. We think, moreover, that in appealing to Buddhism for wherewithal to account for the undoubted "degradation in the status of women due to early Christianity," Mr. Jacobs goes out of his way to obtain what lay in abundance ready to his hand nearer home. We believe that the fact in question was the natural and necessary result in practice of such ascetic teaching as that of Paul, not to speak of the concurrent influence of the legend—taken over by the Christians as part of their general inheritance from Judaism—in which woman appears as the channel through which sin entered the world, unless we are to suppose that this *πρώτον ψεύδος*, with its long train of consequences in the shape of cruelty and vice, was also derived from the Jātakas. Among the imitators of Æsop we think that mention might have been made of Leonardo da Vinci and Northcote. The former consummate and immortal—*quem honoris causa nominatum volo*; the latter a curious spectacle in this century as with the help of Hazlitt he toils at the composition of fables dull and heavy as his own pictures, and that with the serious aim—not of amusing children but of instructing men.

But enough has been said to show the value and interest of the work before us. To the specialist it will need no recommendation; while the general reader—decoyed it may be to its perusal by the falsetto of Mr. Lang—will be surprised to find how varied and copious are the treasures of ancient wit and wisdom which lie hidden beneath the trite surface of Æsop's Fables.

S. ARTHUR STRONG.

¹ This portion of Mr. Jacobs' work will receive fuller treatment in a subsequent number of the Review.